The Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) is the modernized U.S. trade processing system designed to consolidate and automate border processing to significantly enhance border security and foster our Nation's economic security through lawful international trade and travel. The current import system for U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the Automated Commercial System (ACS), was designed in 1984 and eventually will be replaced by ACE as part of a multi-year CBP modernization effort. ACE provides a solid technology foundation for all border security initiatives within CBP and will:

- Allow trade participants access to and management of their trade information via reports;

- Expedite legitimate trade by providing CBP with tools to efficiently process imports/exports and move goods quickly across the border;

- Improve communication, collaboration, and compliance efforts between CBP and the trade community;

- Facilitate efficient collection, processing, and analysis of commercial import and export data; and

- Provide an information-sharing platform for trade data throughout government agencies.

The CBP transition to account-based processing began in October 2003 with the launch of the ACE Secure Data Portal. This customized web page provides a single, user-friendly gateway to access CBP information via the Internet. The portal has three major user categories: 1) CBP; 2) trade community; and 3) Participating Government Agencies.

The ACE Secure Data Portal offers each account user:

- A near real-time review of CBP entry data accessible via the Reports tab;

- An account-based view;

- Management of historical entry summary data;

- Secure account creation and assignment of user access privileges;

- Over 60 downloadable and customizable reports for use by importers and brokers, as well as over 20 reports for carriers;

- Enhanced search capabilities for the Significant Activity Log (SAL); and

- Communications and problem solving tools.

Periodic Payment

CBP introduced periodic payment capabilities in June 2004. Prior to this capability, filings and payments could not be viewed by account. Through periodic payment, ACE capabilities were expanded to include account revenue features, expansion of trade accounts, and on-line business/collaboration tools. With the initial availability of account revenue capabilities, operations began to change from the current transaction-by-transaction payment process to a consolidated

periodic account statement and monthly payment capabilities for Automated Clearing House (ACH) debit and ACH credit participants. Account revenue features allow participants to:

- **Generate Periodic Statements**
  A preliminary monthly statement is generated on a date defined by the trade participant. In order to participate, both the importer and broker need to be ACE account owners. Payment of the monthly statement is due by the 15th working day of the following month. Statements are sent to the trade participants via the Automated Broker Interface and are viewable on the ACE Secure Data Portal.

- **Maintain Accounts Receivable Subsidiary Ledger**
  Entry Summary data is passed from the ACS to ACE on a real-time basis. When goods enter the country, ACE creates an accounts receivable posting, which is made on the sub-ledger account of the Importer of Record (IR) number. Monthly statement participants can view the subsidiary ledger as entries are posted using the account revenue reports.

- **Process Payments**
  Payments are made using either ACH debit or credit.

e-Manifest: Trucks

The ACE electronic manifest (e-Manifest) for trucks helps create a secure and streamlined environment for processing and releasing cargo at the land borders. It is being launched in conjunction with the deployment of the ACE Secure Data Portal, which will bring enhanced security and commercial account capabilities to all land border ports across the nation.

The e-Manifests will be electronically submitted by carriers, which will enable CBP to pre-screen the crew, conveyance, equipment, and shipment information before the truck arrives at the border. Electronic truck manifests allow for greater efficiency in data recording by eliminating redundancy, enabling a carrier to record crew, conveyance, and equipment details as part of the carrier account. In addition, with transponder technology, ACE can identify trucks/drivers from a distance and activate the retrieval of manifest and entry data for CBP Officers. Full implementation of ACE and the e-Manifest: Trucks capability will enable:

- Carriers to create, submit and manage electronic manifests and mandatory advance cargo information, including information about in-bond cargo;

- A single system for truck release, in an effort to reduce processing time at the port;

- Access to reports to evaluate compliance;

- Carriers and their designated agents to track shipment status;

- Enhanced security and commercial account capabilities; and

- In-bond processing *(currently Immediate Transportation shipments only).*

Ultimately ACE will be available as the CBP system of record in virtually all of the more than 350 ports and other facilities, bringing capabilities for automation and integration of data to most CBP trade processes. CBP is carefully preparing for the transition from current systems to ACE. Official record systems and data are being migrated to ACE and dependence on older systems will diminish. By employing a phased transition strategy, CBP will steadily modernize its systems and processes to provide significantly more reliable and efficient operations for ACE users.